

# Total Woman







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**A**nice smile can be a great asset. But, sometimes, it doesn't come naturally. For those of

us with a stained, chipped or, even a "gummy" grin, a perfect smile is an asset we can only acquire.

But we'll be doing it in good company. Cosmetic dentistry has skyrocketed in recent years to become one of dentistry's fastest-

growing areas. According to the American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry, 84 percent of dentists now offer cosmetic procedures as part of their practice.

The dramatic interest can be credited, in part, to awareness inspired by popular shows like *Extreme Makeover*.

"It's been fabulous because it shows a different side of our practice," says Jeffrey Weller, D.D.S., of Weller Aesthetic and Restorative Dental Care in Chicago.

New technologies have also helped, he says. "Next-generation lasers, advanced digital imaging and better materials have made treatments more accessible and more natural looking."

Here's a run down of what can be done.

#### Stained, discolored teeth

Coffee, cigarettes and aging can create a mouth-full of not-so-pearly whites. But the solution is simple. Treatments range from at-home bleaching to in-office tray and laser procedures.

Dr. Weller uses a special-frequency light that, within an

hour, whitens and noticeably brightens teeth. Optimum results might take multiple applications.

Just keep in mind, he says, genetics play a role in the outcome. "Everyone has a limit on how white their teeth can get."

#### Chipped, gapped or crooked teeth

More striking changes are achieved when paper-thin layers of porcelain, called veneers, are adhered to the teeth. The popular treatment closes gaps, realigns crooked teeth, builds up worn teeth and fills out shadowy gaps on the edge of a smile.

And though veneers are expensive (\$1,500 per tooth, with an average of eight to 10 teeth), most professionals now offer a digital imaging system that previews the outcome before any work is done.

#### Gummy smiles

Sometimes a smile can show so much of the gumline it makes teeth look short. Other times, an uneven gumline is the problem. In either case, lasers are the fix: they're used to

reshape gums in a single appointment. And because the laser immediately "seals" the tissue, healing is achieved within a day. Dr. Weller says the procedure is among the most requested in his practice.

#### Metal fillings

Urban legend has it that silver fillings can pick up remote radio signals. But, aside from school children, the rumor holds little fascination for most of us who are keener on the idea of swapping out our silver fillings for tooth-colored ones. The procedure is simple and, at \$150 per tooth, relatively inexpensive.

When a combination of cosmetic dentistry procedures is used, results are the most dramatic. "We can widen a smile and create plumper-looking lips," says Dr. Weller. "It's like getting a face lift on the lower part of your face."

Though, he adds a few words of caution, "Any general dentist can offer cosmetic treatments. You want someone with advanced training."

After all, he says, "You want someone to design your smile."